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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 GUANGZHOU 000174

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SUBJECT: Rights Protection Conferences are Useful, but  
Harassment Continues

Ref: A) 06 Hong Kong 04884; B) 06 Guangzhou 32369

11. (U) Classified by Consul General Robert Goldberg.  
Reason 1.4 (d).

12. (C) SUMMARY: South China participants at the December  
Amnesty International-organized conference for rights  
activists (held in Hong Kong) called the event useful, but  
too brief and disorganized. None of the activists thought  
the meeting would have a significant effect on the rights  
protection movement. Government harassment against  
activists continues, with two South China activists not  
being allowed to attend the Amnesty conference. In  
February, two of the participants from the Amnesty-  
conference were not permitted to attend the International  
PEN regional conference in Hong Kong. One activist said he  
was prevented in October from campaigning as an independent  
candidate in Hainan province. END SUMMARY.

Background  
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13. (C) Nine mainland activists gathered in Hong Kong on  
December 13-15, for a conference hosted by Amnesty  
International and the mainland-based website, Chinese  
Rights Defenders network (ref A). Three of the  
participants were from provinces in the Consulate's  
district: two from Guangdong (Zhao Dagong, from Shenzhen;  
Ai Xiaoming, from Guangzhou) and one from Hainan Island  
(Qin Geng, from Haikou). Zhao, Qin and Ai separately  
discussed with Congenoff their views about the conference  
and offered suggestions for improvement. Congenoff was  
informed that two other South China activists, Fujian's Lin  
Xinyu and Guangzhou's Wu Wei (better known as "Ye Du"), had  
been invited by Amnesty to attend, but were barred from  
traveling outside of the Mainland. On February 6, the  
South China Morning Post reported that Qin and Zhao were  
themselves prevented from attending the PEN Asia and  
Pacific regional conference in Hong Kong. Qin had his Hong  
Kong travel document rescinded and Zhao was blocked at the  
border by mainland authorities.

Conference's Utility  
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14. (C) All of the rights protection activists (weiquan)  
had very positive comments about the conference, saying it  
was important for meeting others and learning about other  
possible avenues of protest and activism. However, they

all also said the conference was too short. Qin said that many of the Hong Kong-based diplomats who came spent most of their time asking "where are you from" and "what do you do," rather than discussing more concrete means of reform. Besides the benefits of meeting other activists, Zhao said they also appreciated the opportunity to meet people from China Labor Bulletin, Aids and gay groups, Hong Kong Legislator Albert Ho and an underground internet radio station. There did not seem to be any firm conclusions or plans reached from the meeting.

Zhao Dagong  
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15. (C) Zhao is a Shenzhen-based secretary of the Chinese Independent PEN Center (CIPC). The CIPC has nine secretaries, five in China and four abroad (three in Washington D.C.). According to Zhao, the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) provides funding to CIPC, whose goal is to protect dissident writers in China. Zhao had previously worked in Shenzhen for the New York-based China Labor Watch (CLW) and recruited well-known legal activist Tang Jingling to join CLW. Zhao writes articles for New Century News, Chinese Rights Defenders Network, Democratic China (Minzhu Zhongguo) and Boxun.com.

16. (C) Zhao concluded from the Amnesty conference that activists avoid overly controversial methods of protest. He cited as a positive example the study groups (dushu hui) that intellectuals such as Zhongshan University's Ai Xiaoming have initiated to discuss current events. Zhao believes the rights protection movement should have three "nots": activists should not criticize the local government; he promised he would not criticize the Shenzhen government and was thus allowed to travel to Hong Kong; should not unite together in a well-organized group or

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political party; and should not work too closely with the Falun Gong. Zhao also stressed the role of foreign governments, praising German Chancellor Angela Maerkel for meeting many important Chinese dissidents during her tour of China.

Qin Geng and Wu Wei - Government Pressure  
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17. (C) Congenoff met with two other secretaries from the ICPC, Haikou-based Qin Geng and Guangzhou-based Wu Wei. Qin recommended the United States and other countries should try to include immediate family members in visitor programs, so they could become more knowledgeable about the activist's work.

18. (C) Qin described his harassment because of his independent candidacy for October, 2006 district elections in Longhua district, Haikou city. Qin said that the Communist Party "planted" candidates on the ballot list who then mysteriously withdrew their candidacy a few days before the election. (Note: A legitimate election, according to the PRC, requires at least three candidates. End note.). Additionally, many of Longhua's 10,000 voters were told by government officials to abstain from voting. According to Qin, Longhua was the only district in Hainan that did not allow elections. Qin decided not to alert the media about his case because he did not want his ICPC work to be affected. Qin also mentioned government pressure against Wuhan-based activist and fellow independent candidate Wen Yan. According to Radio Free Asia, Wen was threatened by state security officials not to run an election campaign. He refused and on September 12, he and his mother were attacked by thugs.

19. (C) ICPC Secretary Wu said that, from 2004 till early 2006, he had been forced by Guangzhou Public Security Bureau (PSB) officials to live outside of Guangzhou. Wu,

who is webmaster for ICPC's website, showed Congenoff a 2004 Washington Post article noting that the group's website has been shutdown 49 different times.

Ai Xiaoming  
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¶10. (C) Zhongshan University professor and documentary filmmaker Ai Xiaoming said the conference, while certainly useful, would not lead to any great change. She also does not think that the trials of activists such as Gao Zhisheng and Guo Feixiong will affect the rights protection movement. She believes the movement does not need a single leader or unified group; instead, she said, an on-line community is more effective since the government cannot shutdown the network as easily.

¶11. (C) Ai proudly noted that she has raised around USD 3,000 for Aids prevention from people who have donated 1 RMB (USD 0.13) after watching her documentary on the Henan aids scandal (ref B). Ai has previously received funding from Oxfam in Hong Kong for a women studies program (money which she used for film projects) and is seeking a grant from NED to improve Chinese people's knowledge of the United Nations, particularly its history and basic human rights principles.

Comment: Finding Political Substitutes  
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¶12. (C) Without periodic interaction, activists are forced to find substitutes and create a virtual community. Since the Chinese government does not permit reform or open debate, except that controlled by party or government offices, activists have focused on international organizations, such as Amnesty International or the United Nations, as channels for protest. Because of China's engagement in the UN (in part, wanting to strengthen its Security Council position), activists focus on UN principles of human rights and democracy as a backdoor to Chinese reform.

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